1: Kolarz J-4 (no date) 1954 RR1 Siberia RR1

167 241 Eastern border areas the government made concessions even in the economic sphere. In European Russia only collective farmers were at that time allowed to own a cow as their own personal possession, never industrial or transport workers.

KOMSOMOL COLONIZATION

167 665 ●383 The military colonization largely overlaps with another special form of colonization in the Soviet Far East, which is carried out with the help of the Communist Youth League, the Komsomol. The Youth League is the backbone of the Far Eastern units of the Soviet Army. Towards the end of the inter-war period 60 to 70 per cent of the soldiers in the Far East were Komsomol members. Hence among the demobilized soldiers, too, there must have been a good deal of 'Komsomol spirit'. The Komsomol influence in the Far East is, however, by no means confined to the army. The entire Soviet Far East has been described as a 'Komsomol Territory'. This is true both in the figurative and in the literal sense. The Soviet Far East is 'komsomolsky' because it is a young pioneer country, but the Komsomol, the Communist Youth League, is also directly connected with the Soviet Far East as one of the principal promoters of its colonization.

Many Communist Youth League members went to the Far East as individuals out of a spirit of adventure and also out of a feeling of patriotic duty. The Komsomol, as an organization, was responsible for two big spectacular actions. One was the foundation of the town Komsomolsk-on-Amur, the other was the movement initiated by Madame Khetagurova.

The history of Komsomolsk goes back to the spring of 1932 when the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League chartered two steamers, *Kolumb* and *Komintern*, which sailed with 400 young people, including a number of Civil War orphans, to the village of Permskoe on the Lower Amur. (The village had been founded as early as 1858 by Russian peasant colonists hailing from the region of Perm in the eastern part of European Russia.) Even the first small party of Komsomol members outnumbered the local population of 160 inhabi- [361] tants. In the second half of 1932 many more young people arrived, and in December of the same year the All-Russian Executive Committee published a decree which transformed Permskoe into the town of Komsomolsk. The decree read well in the Moscow newspapers, but to the young builders of Komsomolsk it must have appeared utterly unrealistic. At the time when the decree was published they were in a state of despair. The building of the town had had to be interrupted in view of the harshness of the Russian Far Eastern winter, and the inexperience of the new settlers had resulted in great complications. During

1: Kolarz J-4 (no date) 1954 RR1 Siberia RR1

this early period of construction Komsomolsk had a street with the characteristic nickname of 'Street of Accidents', and a whole quarter was known as the 'Fire Settlement' ('Pozharny Posyolok').

Things in Komsomolsk went wrong for several years, and in 1937, when the city celebrated its fifth anniversary, the party authorities thought that the time had come to carry out a large-scale purge among the builders of the 'City of Youth'. One of the most distinguished citizens of the new town, the director of its metallurgical plant, then declared bluntly, 'We are mercilessly rooting out this scum of wreckers'.[19] 'This scum of wreckers' were people whom official Soviet propaganda had previously included among the selfless enthusiastic patriots engaged in self-sacrificing, heroic construction work. To justify the purge the party leadership alleged that 'agents of foreign intelligence services, bandits and diversionists' had penetrated into the ranks of workers and technicians of Komsomolsk, thanks to the complacency of certain leading personalities. According to the official version the 'enemies of the people' at work in Komsomolsk were very active and ingenious. They mixed concrete with sugar so that the degree of its cohesion was lowered, they put glass into ball-bearings to provoke accidents and destroyed vital blue-prints to delay the growth of local industry.

The real reason for the chaos in Komsomolsk was not the criminal activity of wreckers, but the lack of co-ordination between the various state trusts which owned the industrial enterprises in the town-to-be. Each of these trusts constructed a workers' settlement around its plant, and until 1940 there was no over-all building plan for the much advertised town of the Communist Youth League. This explains why sanitary conditions and municipal services were still practically non-existent, even by the outbreak of the Second World War.

The over-all building plan of Komsomolsk which came into being in 1940 provided for a population of 500,000.[20] Although the fulfilment of this aim is still far off, Komsomolsk has become an economic and cultural factor in the Far East. In 1947 the town had 100,000 inhabitants and was the proud owner of two undertakings of all-Union importance, the Iron and Steel Works, 'Amurstal', and a shipyard.[21] Cultural life, too, had developed greatly. The number of schools reached thirty-four in 1947 and forty-five in 1952. In addition, Komsomolsk has a Palace of Culture, a theatre, thirty libraries, a training college for teachers of secondary schools, a music school and four 'parks of culture and rest'.[22] It has tried to keep up its reputation as a 'City of Youth' and is still recruiting young workers from European Russia, particularly from among war orphans.

The second big Komsomol initiative for the settlement of the Far East, the Khetagurova movement, has its roots in the lack of women in the Far East and the necessity to remedy the situation. The well-